



**Hoosier Heartland Adoption Newsletter**  
**\*\*\* Serving adoptive families in Indiana \*\*\***  
**Volume 1 Issue 3**

**In this issue: Welcome, Holiday Coping Ideas, Training, Services, Support Groups, and Resources**

**Welcome!**

Thank you so much for all of your continued responses to the newsletter and for your dedication to your children. Please try to spread the word that **we are only available online** unless your county office elects to send a hardcopy. Check us out at: [www.adoptachild.in.gov](http://www.adoptachild.in.gov) - **click on Permanency and then Adoption. There will be a link to the newsletter there.**

As the holidays approach please keep in mind that this is a difficult time for children who suffer tremendous grief and loss issues surrounding their biological families. Loyalty to them and just “missing them” at these forever family gathering times make it difficult for everyone to stay regulated and loving.

Our own Indiana FAKT training describes holidays as a hard time for both the child and the adoptive family and these concerns and issues that arise are opportunities for family discussions regarding feelings surrounding the holiday.

Many of us were able to see Jane Schooler, of Ohio, speak at the Adoption Forum in Indianapolis, and she poignantly spoke of the “psychological presence of the biological family” in our children’s lives, and from personal experience I know this is true for our adopted daughter who still longs to see her family. Let us walk gently though this season which can bring joy and sadness to those we love.

**HOLIDAY ADVICE:**

On [About.com](http://adoption.about.com/cs/legalissues/a/Holidaystrugl.htm?once=true&) (<http://adoption.about.com/cs/legalissues/a/Holidaystrugl.htm?once=true&> ) “Your Guide to Adoption/Foster Care,” Carrie Craft, BA, writes about “Developmental Grieving.” She describes the issues may surround a traumatic anniversary that our children deal with and this time of year, as well as any birthday, anniversary of removal, mother’s/father’s day, and death. Ms Craft, an adoptive/foster parent, states that children may not remember why they are moody, sad, or angry but their bodies hold that memory which may haunt them at this time.

Carrie makes the following suggestions:

1. Have each family member share a memory of a past Christmas. This is a great way to validate your children’s feelings and birth family experiences. Do not push them to share about their birth homes, they will when they are ready.
2. Have the children work on a page in their lifebooks or scrap books. If you don’t have photos ask them to draw a memory.
3. Buy a special ornament that represents the child’s birth family or heritage. Let them select it.

4. Allow the child to feel sad and help them work through their grief. Journaling or drawing is good. If the sadness seems prolonged contact a professional.
5. Last but not least – TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF!!! Don't let your child's blues get to you.

Memories are sometimes the only thing left of their birth families, sit down and share these it may be a great bonding moment for you and your child. Contact Carrie: [adoption.guide@adopt.com](mailto:adoption.guide@adopt.com)

Donna Bollinger, State Director, of SAFY of Indiana also gives the following advice:

It is the “best of times” and the “worst of times!” Holidays! They can challenge any family and foster families are no exception! Children and youth that have histories of trauma-laden experiences stored in their memories because of severe abuse and neglect can have unexpected and often negative behaviors in reaction to the “best laid Holiday plans. Throughout the Holidays, “stay in relationship” with children by making an effort to connect with them. Here are five (5) tips to make the holiday chaos work “for” the family, rather than against it:

**1. Keep your voice calm, volume low and emotionally regulated.** Excitement can produce good stress that can turn into bad stress if parents over-react to volume issues. Stay calm, cool and collected.....patience is definitely a virtue that pays dividends, especially during Holiday time. Though it is easier “said than done,” it is an emotional goal worth setting when preparing for the rush of the holiday season.

**2. Use encouraging words and phrases.** Compliment children often! “Catch them doing something right” and ignore bad behaviors whenever possible. **Widen your window of tolerance** for those often seen, frustrating, but common behaviors in attachment-challenged children and youth. At holiday time especially, children traumatized by past severe abuse and neglect often have an increased level of anxiety that is the foundation for irritability and anger that comes out in unexpected ways. Long after the child spills that glass of chocolate milk at the table, expecting from his past experience an angry reprimand (or worse a back-handed slap across the face because of his “stupidity”), he will remember with awe and amazement the way you said in a friendly voice, “Here, I'll get a rag and we can clean this up together. It will be ok!”

**3. Make Holiday plans simple and easy as “child's play.”** If a child can't help with the process, don't do it! If doing something or using “Grandma's best” will fill you with anxiety and ignite stress if a dish gets dropped or a special heirloom is ruined, don't go there. Use the easiest, most comfortable forms of holiday preparation possible, so the emphasis is on “relationship building” not “things.” Remember, “People are to love and things are to use!” (my husband's Grandma's adage.)

**4. Be flexible!** It doesn't matter if things don't go the way they are planned. Think “process” not outcome. It is not how the tree twinkles, but the twinkle in the eyes of the children as they are stringing popcorn for the tree (or throwing it at each other..) or throwing tinsel on the branches! Enjoy them and let them see you purposefully playful!

**5. Expect Mistakes!** Mistakes are for learning.....for we adults! With special needs children and youth, the mistakes they make are more of a learning experience for parents than the children themselves. Because of their unexpected, often frustrating actions, adults get to practice maturity, patience, love, kindness, gentleness, meekness and all the other virtues that go along with creating the healing environment so necessary for recovery from severe abuse and neglect. Juli Alvarado, who taught us many things, says, “Stop, Drop and Roll!” Contact Donna: [bollingerd@safy.org](mailto:bollingerd@safy.org)

### **Parents of College Bound Teens**

Good news is here for former foster youth adopted at age **13** or older. The passing of this bill allows children who were adopted at age **13** to be defined as an “independent student” on the FASFA which allows for financial aid eligibility to be determined by the student's ability to pay, not their family's income level. This is a real victory for our adopted youth or those youth who

are considering adoption to be able to have a forever family without “losing” out on a tremendous amount of financial aid for higher education. This law goes into effect in 2009.

At [http://www.edfund.org/pdfs/CCRAA\\_Overview.pdf](http://www.edfund.org/pdfs/CCRAA_Overview.pdf) on page 8 you will see the new definition of an “independent student.”

### We “Asked” you “Answered”:

Hi Ann, I have adopted 4 girls from the child welfare system and one has aged out and the other is a senior. Hopefully, it will be useful information for other families who are making a life plan for their child(ren).

Tonia, (19), was adopted at the age of 13 and graduated in May. Our biggest resource was in MICHELLE CLARK at the IUPUI Education Success Program (ESP!) [micmicla@iupui.edu](mailto:micmicla@iupui.edu) (317-274-7234). Michelle guided us through the entire college enrollment process. She met with me and offered to guide me through the FASFA paperwork. She also provides this service to teens that do not have people to help them fill out this paperwork. She pointed us to scholarships and additional money that was available. She let us know about deadlines and helped with a timeline for Tonia's senior year in high school. Her major role is to serve as a liaison between the student and the professor and to help students find resources to help them with their academics. The way she advocates for these children is just awesome. Tonia is now a freshman at Anderson University majoring in elementary education

Maranda, (18), was adopted at 12 and is a senior at Indianapolis Metropolitan High School (charter school). She has an IEP and a large high school (even with resources) was not a good fit for her. I selected Indy Met because of the individual attention and small class size. It also allowed Maranda to participate in interns on Tuesdays and Thursdays. This helped her people and speaking skills immensely. She has worked with a day care center for a year and volunteered there this past summer. It was such a good fit that they hired Maranda, she works there during her breaks from school. They plan to keep her on when she graduates from high school. Maranda would like to attend Ivy Tech Community College majoring in early childhood education. She has already applied to college and we will be filling out financial aid papers at the beginning of the year. Although her plan looks different than her sister's, I had to realize that all children were not alike. Maranda will need help with college and Ivy Tech affords her the opportunity to remain at home (or close by in an apartment, if she chooses I am sure that Maranda will use the services offered by Michelle.

In setting goals with my daughters I kept in mind what each was capable of doing academically and emotionally. We then began to plan their goals based on their interest, academic aptitude, and emotional state. I knew what each one could withstand. I knew it would be good for Tonia to be far enough away from home to grow and mature, but close enough to receive help. I know that Maranda will need to be very close to home for educational and emotional support. Maranda has recently tested and we are not sure if she will qualify for social security benefits. However, we were told that they must be tested in order to qualify.

Also, check with individual counties because some will extend subsidies to assist you with college expenses (and medical). These are the things that I have done to help with my daughters' future life plans.

[Editor's note: A big thank you to Dawn Cooper, of Indianapolis, for this very helpful information.](#)

FYI: The IUPUI-ESP! program serves former Marion County Foster Youth 18-24 or those youth attending Marion County Colleges. Do not forget that the **Guardian Scholars Program** at Ball State University also serves students at BSU and the Area 06 Ivy Tech State Colleges. They offer the same type of services for youth and their families. Contact: [gscholars@bsu.edu](mailto:gscholars@bsu.edu)

### Available Trainings

**Clarian Health** offers classes to parents both pre and post adoption. There are classes available on attachment and bonding post-adoption Stress-Issues, parenting the special needs or older child, and other issues that face all of us. There is a charge for the classes. For more information contact: [Kminor1@clarian.org](mailto:Kminor1@clarian.org) or check their website at: [www.clarian.org/adoptioneducation](http://www.clarian.org/adoptioneducation)

**Children's Bureau CAP (Coordinating Attachment and Permanency)** program:

A six week group for the whole family that includes dinner together and group work. The Children's bureau also offers a **Theraplay** program for families. Contact them at: **317-545-5284**

**Beyond Consequences Institute:** Heather Forbes co-author of "Beyond Consequences Logic and Control" has a website that offers support, inspiration, and sound advice for adoptive parents. Go to: [beyondconsequences.org](http://beyondconsequences.org)

### Adoption Support Groups:

Here is an new addition to the list from the last issue:

**Hendricks, Putnam and Morgan Counties:** Stephanie Kerner, contact. Heritage Foster Adoption Support Inc., they have been funded by Adopt US Kids to get a group up and running in this area. They had their first training at the Plainfield Library on 12/1. Please feel free to contact Stephanie: email [kernersa@hotmail.com](mailto:kernersa@hotmail.com) or cell **765-650-8276**.

If you have information about other groups that we have not mentioned contact Ann Arvidson at [ann.arvidson@dcs.in.gov](mailto:ann.arvidson@dcs.in.gov) or 317-234-4500. **SUPPORT is VITAL!!!**

### RESOURCES:

#### **Websites:**

[www.adoptachild.in.gov](http://www.adoptachild.in.gov) Heartland Newsletter: click on Permanency, then adoption, and then, Newsletter. To reach a local SNAP Specialist: click on: What can your SNAP Specialist do for you? **Providers for post adoptive services are listed on this site!**

[www.childtrauma.org](http://www.childtrauma.org) – There are four trainings available for free on their on-line university. Very informative, and it is a must for understanding the effects of childhood trauma on our children.

#### **Books and CDs:**

Deborah Gray, Nurturing Adoptions: Creating Resilience after Neglect and Trauma, (July, 2007). This book is a tool for adoption professionals, from social workers to therapists to adoption medical practitioners and more.

Sherry Eldridge and Rob Williams, Forever Fingerprints: An amazing Discovery for Adopted Children

Gregory Keck and Regina Kupecky, Parenting the Hurt Child: Helping Adoptive Families Heal and Grow and Adopting the Hurt Child: Hope for Families With Special-Needs Kids : A Guide for Parents and Professionals

Audio CD, Eric Guy, "Emotionally Regulated Men!: The Importance of the Masculine Influence." An interview with Juli Alvarado, available at [www.coaching-forlife.com](http://www.coaching-forlife.com)